



The Sarit Centre

THE MARKET

Kenya's economy has been on a steady growth path, and the last 15 years has seen an increase in the number of shopping malls. A successful pioneer in this sector - The Sarit Centre is a modern diversified shopping mall and one of the largest in East Africa boasting 500,000 sq ft on six levels - the busiest in terms of human traffic and a host to 120 tenants - 70 retail and service providers.

The Centre targets the A-B market segment that includes residents from the affluent suburbs located in the west and north of the Nairobi Central Business District (CBD). Many of them are professionals, manufacturers, industrialists, and businessmen/women from all the three main communities in Kenya - Africans, Asians and Europeans.

The A-B market segment accounts for 70 percent of the total sales while 30 percent comes from the C-D market segment. In the last complete financial year, the Centre's annual turnover was 60 million US dollars. Despite stiff competition from ten other major shopping malls, it still enjoys 35 percent of the A-B market share in Nairobi.

Kenya's burgeoning middle class is embracing the shopping concept with many people having travelled abroad - hence having very high expectations. This has seen the expansion of hypermarkets linked to a nucleus of small units, rapidly changing retailing patterns in Nairobi. Taking into consideration the growing and changing needs of shoppers, the Centre is working on a phase three development project to prepare for the future.



ACHIEVEMENTS

Within two years of opening, in 1985, the Centre recorded 50,000 plus visitors on Christmas Eve - unheard of shopper traffic at the time. Also in the same year, the Centre became the first mall to embellish its premises with Christmas lights, both externally and internally.

The Centre was the first shopping mall in Kenya to introduce Christmas (and other charity-based) shopping promotions using sophisticated break-open and scratch cards sourced from a UK gaming specialist company - Edward Thompson of Sunderland. It was also the first to start a Value Card loyalty programme for shoppers in 1997, the first to introduce computerised car parking fees and the first to introduce pedestrian counting systems.

HISTORY

The Sarit Centre is a family business managed by third generation Kenyans who trace their roots and business success to their forefathers who came to Kenya in the early 1900s; Jadavji Ratanji Rughani in 1914, and Vidhu Ramji Shah in 1909. Rughani lived to officiate the laying of the foundation stone of the Centre.

In 1973, His Holiness Sat Guru Pujya Hariram Bapa was visiting S. V. Bachubhai Shah, then resident on part of the land where The Sarit Centre has since been built. One evening, while taking tea in the garden, they found the noise of heavy trucks on the roadside very disturbing and Bachubhai assured his Holiness when he visited next, he would have moved house to a quieter area.

Later while strolling in the garden His Holiness Sat Guru Pujya Hariram Bapa said: "Don't sell this land. Instead, buy the adjacent plots. This land is blessed; something extraordinary will take place here!" The Shah and Rughani families heeded the advice and gradually bought out the neighbouring plots. In due course, on visits to Europe, Maneklal Rughani was fascinated by the new shopping malls springing up everywhere and hence the idea of the Sarit Centre was conceived.

The Centre's architectural concept was inspired by Brent Cross shopping mall in London. However, at the beginning the project had to be abruptly stopped following a coup attempt in 1982. In April 1983, it was opened on a much smaller format and was the first enclosed shopping mall in Eastern Africa. More than two and half decades later, it remains among the largest malls in the region.

Through consumer research, the centre has successfully grown and met the dynamic

consumer trends of shoppers. In 1997, a phase two expansion project saw the expansion of the Centre to include more entertainment (two screen cinemas), an international exhibition hall, large a 15,000 sq ft food court, a health club with swimming pool and more retail space. Phase three expansion is expected to make the Centre more competitive.

THE PRODUCT

The Sarit Centre is a modern inter-active shopping mall that has four levels of retail and service outlets, two tower office blocks, a health facility run by the Africa Air Rescue (AAR) and private doctors' offices. It is located in Westlands, a dynamic commercial growth centre three km from Nairobi's CBD.

The mall is designed to meet the requirements of residents and businesses who want to avoid the crowded CBD. It brings together a huge range of products and services in a neat, enclosed environment where people feel secure, comfortable and can spend more time than they would if they were shopping in the CBD. Shopper traffic averages 25,000 daily.

The Centre's main focus is to provide excellent world-class customer service. To achieve this, consultants from South Africa have trained tenants on aspects of customer service, shop front and lighting improvement and display techniques. Customer service remains the Centre's main challenge





RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The Centre always makes sure it has something interesting and unique to offer its shoppers. In 1997 the Centre introduced its Value Card loyalty programme, where shoppers earn points after shopping in the premises. There has also been an improvement to shop fronts and in-shop displays by its major tenants.

Other additions to the Centre's range of retail units include Elite Computers who hold the Apple Mac franchise, more bank automated teller machines (ATMs), Kenya Airways booking office, and Safaricom customer service centre. There is a long list of prospective tenants who would like space in the Centre, especially branded fashion outlets.

PROMOTION

Promotion and marketing of The Sarit Centre is an important aspect of the business. Since it

began business in 1983, events and exhibitions have comprised a major component of the Centres marketing strategy. As far back as 1984, the Centre set aside an exhibition area for in-mall events. These events generate their own income and support



advertising on all media (radio, TV, newspapers, and outdoor) which are used to publicise events and attract visitors to the Centre. The strategy has been very successful and tenants don't pay for marketing campaigns. During the Christmas season however, tenants do contribute a small fee to boost the advertising kitty because of stiff competition from other malls.

The Centre also promotes in-house and allows external event organisers to utilise its facilities for community events, wedding receptions, corporate launches, trade and consumer exhibitions that take place every week. The Centre hosts more than 20 major three to five day exhibitions annually and over 50 events in total per year. Exhibitions are very successful and record traffic of between 5,000 - 22,500 people per event.

To boost its promotions, the brand has produced several promotional/marketing materials including special slogans that have been very successful. The Centres slogan - "City within a City" has lived through the years and boosted the image of the brand. The Centres promotional slogans like: "Lick, Stick & Win!" and "Scratch & Win!" are synonymous with The Sarit Centre - many years after these innovative promotions were first held.

Another promotional initiative is the www.kateskikapu.com website which allows Kenyans abroad to shop and pay online for their family and friends in Nairobi. The service has been available for more than five years. The Centre also uses mobile technology - SMS messaging to inform its loyal shoppers about special offers, sales and to update them on special services they can access using the Value Card, like parking and special discounts.

BRAND VALUES

The Sarit Centre likes to be associated with several values: Convenience, everything under one roof and accessibility of management. At Sarit Centre, no appointments are required by tenants or members of the public to meet with top managers, including the centre manager himself. The brand is committed to service to the community. Over the years, the Sarit Centre has stood for quality, service, friendliness and honesty.

After 25 years in the business, the Sarit Centre is one of the most recognised brands in Kenya. By deliberate design and commitment the logo features in all media advertising except radio.

To ensure consistency of its services and products, the centre has complied with Kenya's National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) requirements. It also ensures all its tenants have complied and meet the Nairobi City Council (NCC) and public health requirements.

THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE SARIT CENTRE

- The current management of the Centre is in the hands of third generation Kenyans
- The Centre first opened its doors in April 1983 and is one of the oldest shopping malls in Kenya
- The Centre's architectural concept was inspired from the Brent Cross in London
- His Holiness Sat Guru Pujya Hariram Bapa prophesied the success of the Sarit Centre
- Sarit Centre was the first mall in East Africa to become a member of the International Council of Shopping Centres (ICSC)
- The Sarit Centre was the first mall in Eastern Africa to participate and present a paper at the first African Congress of Shopping Centres in South Africa in 1993

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